



# PFAS in the Fairfield Police Athletic League (PAL) Ponds

## Questions and Answers

### ***What are PFAS?***

PFAS refers to a family of chemicals known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. PFAS were used for a long time in many household and industrial products. These chemicals were used to make products able to repel water and resist stains and grease. PFAS was used to make carpet, fabric, clothing, food packaging, pots and pans, and personal care products. PFAS was also a key ingredient in some fire-fighting foams. Some PFAS chemicals are no longer used in manufacturing. Some of these chemicals can persist for a very long time once released into the environment. Some of these chemicals can also remain in our bodies long after our exposure has stopped.

### ***Why is PFAS in the PAL Ponds?***

The PAL ponds are located near fields that have recently been identified as containing PFAS. These fields have a history of land-spreading materials used for fertilizer that likely contained PFAS. The presence of PFAS was not known at the time of their spreading. PFAS in soil can leach into groundwater. Soil with PFAS may also be transported to ponds and other surface waters during heavy rains. For this reason, the PAL ponds were tested as part of the ongoing PFAS investigation in the Fairfield area.

Recently collected water samples from the two PAL ponds were tested for PFAS. Both ponds had levels of PFAS that raise concerns about their potential to also be present in fish.

### ***Should I be concerned about eating fish from the PAL ponds?***

Sampling and testing for PFAS in fish is underway but it can take weeks or months from the time a fish is caught to when we can get laboratory results on how much PFAS is in the fish. To more quickly understand the potential for PFAS to be in fish, Maine CDC is looking at studies about PFAS in fish and in waters from other areas. Based on these studies and the levels of PFAS in PAL ponds, we estimate that fish caught here may have unsafe levels of PFAS. Maine CDC recommends that people do not eat fish caught in the PAL ponds while we wait for data on PFAS levels in fish. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the town of Fairfield have posted warnings to not eat fish caught in the PAL ponds. You may still fish these waters but should release your catch.

### ***Should I be concerned if I have eaten fish from the PAL ponds?***

This is a difficult question to answer as we do not yet have data on levels of PFAS in fish from these ponds. These ponds are also stocked in the spring and fall with trout. Fish caught soon after stocking will not have had much time for the PFAS in water to build up in fish tissue. The more time fish have lived in the ponds and the more fish you may have consumed from these waters, the more your exposure to PFAS will be. This exposure can create a potential health concern. If you are concerned about fish you have eaten from one of the PAL ponds, contact one of our toxicologists at 866-292-3474 (toll-free in Maine), 207-287-4311, or Maine Relay 711.

### ***What are the health effects of PFAS?***

Scientists are still learning about the possible health effects from exposure to PFAS. Most people have low amounts of these chemicals in their blood because they were used for several decades in many household and industrial products. Regularly eating fish with PFAS can result in higher levels of these chemicals in the blood.

According to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, some, but not all, studies in people who have higher levels of certain PFAS in the blood have shown that these chemicals may:

- increase the risk of kidney and testicular cancer;
- increase cholesterol levels;
- increase the risk of high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia in pregnant women;
- lower infant birth weights; however, the decrease in birth weight is small and may not affect the infant's health;
- decrease how well the body responds to vaccinations;
- cause changes in liver enzyme levels.

Contact one of our toxicologists if you are concerned about PFAS and your health at 866-292-3474 (toll-free in Maine), 207-287-4311, or Maine Relay 711.

